

list. So I think it's a pretty distinguished list, Mr. Vice President, myself.

Let's have a good time tonight. Let's wake up tomorrow proud that we won. And let's think about what we can do to build that bridge to the 21st century.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:15 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Donald L. Fowler, national chairman, Senator Christopher J. Dodd, general chairman, Marvin Rosen, national finance

chairman, and Richard Sullivan, finance director, Democratic National Committee; Peter Knight, campaign manager, Terry McAuliffe, finance chairman, and Laura Hartigan, finance director, Clinton/Gore '96; Mayors Dennis Archer of Detroit, MI, and Edward Rendell of Philadelphia, PA; Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, civil rights leader; and Justin Dart, former Chair, President's Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Remarks on the Resignation of Secretary of State Warren Christopher and an Exchange With Reporters *November 7, 1996*

*The President.* We are truly about to make a new beginning. Yesterday, at the wonderful welcome home that Hillary and Al and Tipper and I had at the White House, I saw a remarkable sight: Warren Christopher was wearing a T-shirt. [*Laughter*] He did have it on underneath his Saville Row suit. Nonetheless, it was there. This is the same Warren Christopher, I would remind you all, who made People magazine's best dressed list, the only man ever to eat Presidential M&M's on Air Force One with a knife and fork. [*Laughter*]

Yesterday Secretary Christopher gave new meaning to my conviction that we are entering an age of new and remarkable possibility. Today it is with great regret at his departure but deep gratitude for his service to our administration and to our country that I have accepted Warren Christopher's decision to step down as Secretary of State.

He has left the mark of his hand on history, not in some theoretical, intangible fashion but in concrete ways that have made a real difference in the lives of the American people and people around the world. He has served three previous Democratic administrations, as a trade negotiator, a Deputy Attorney General, a Deputy Secretary of State when he brought home our hostages from Iran. These past 4 years, I have been proud and privileged to have him by my side as Secretary of State.

Today, if the children of the Middle East can imagine a future of cooperation, not conflict,

if Bosnia's killing fields are once again playing fields, if the people of Haiti now live in democracy instead of under dictators, in no small measure, it is because of Warren Christopher. The cause of peace and freedom and decency have never had a more tireless or tenacious advocate.

Those of us who have worked with Chris know that his quiet dignity masks a steely determination. Let me cite just one example.

History will record that Bosnia's peace was secured at Dayton. It will also recall that, literally, until the last minute the outcome was in doubt. Our negotiators had their bags packed and were ready to head home without an agreement. But Chris refused to give up. And the force of his will finally convinced the Balkan leaders to give into the logic of peace.

For all Secretary Christopher's skill at diffusing crises, I believe his lasting legacy was built behind the headlines, laying the foundations for our future. Under his leadership we've taken on new threats like terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and environmental degradation. We're seizing the opportunities to make the 21st century more secure and prosperous for every American; working toward a Europe that is undivided, democratic, and at peace; building a new partnership with a strong and open Russia; meeting the challenges of change in Asia with strength and steadiness; opening more markets abroad and helping

American businesses to take advantage of these new opportunities.

Perhaps most important, Warren Christopher's life provides powerful proof that America has a unique responsibility and a unique privilege to lead. He has helped the American people understand that we cannot lead on the cheap; it takes time, energy, and resources. And as we go forward, I pledge to protect and preserve the resources for our diplomacy that Warren Christopher has put to such good use.

Finally, let me say, as all of you know, I owe Warren Christopher a debt that extends far beyond the broad range of his responsibilities. Few individuals did more to shape my first administration. He chaired our Vice Presidential search committee, and I'd say he came up with a pretty good recommendation. *[Laughter]* The American people have him to thank for my selection of Al Gore and the subsequent development of the most unique partnership in the history of the Presidency and the Vice Presidency. And I think it is clear that the Vice President has been the most influential and constructive force ever to occupy the Vice Presidency's office.

Warren Christopher directed the 1992 transition, in particular, in building a Cabinet team that helped to put America on track as we enter the 21st century, one which a scholar of the Presidency wrote me and said was the most loyal Cabinet since Thomas Jefferson's first administration.

These past 4 years, time and again, I have reached out to my friend for his counsel, his judgment, and his support. It is no exaggeration to say that Warren Christopher has literally been America's elder statesman. It's also no exaggeration today that he retains the energy, the vigor, and the capacity of a person half his age.

I thank Secretary Christopher for agreeing to stay on until we select a successor. I will consult closely with him in that process. In the weeks ahead I may have a hard time finding him, however. The Secretary is continuing to do the vital business of our Nation, participating next week in the Cairo conference, traveling to China and throughout Asia, moving on to Europe to work on Bosnia, and adapting NATO to the future.

Secretary Christopher already has set a 4-year record as America's most traveled diplomat-in-chief. If you could earn frequent flyer miles for Government travel, we would owe him at

least a round trip on the space shuttle. *[Laughter]* The Vice President says that with the travel he's already logged in, he could go to the Moon and back and back to the Moon again. I want him to travel a few more miles so he will finish on the right planet. *[Laughter]*

Through dignity, determination, hard work, and skill, through an unbelievable, powerful collection and combination of his intellect, his integrity, and his good heart, Warren Christopher has earned our Nation's admiration and a debt that can never be fully repaid. From the bottom of my heart, I thank him for his service to the Nation and his unique friendship to the President.

Mr. Secretary.

*[At this point, Secretary Christopher made brief remarks.]*

Q. Mr. President, how will you go about choosing a successor? What's your plan for doing that?

*The President.* Don't sit down now. It won't take long for me to answer this question. *[Laughter]*

Let me say to all of you here in the press, I intend to have a press conference tomorrow afternoon, and I'll be more than happy to answer all of your questions in greater detail.

But I will go about selecting a successor, first of all, by soliciting the Secretary of State's advice and the advice of others on our national security team and others beyond that with whom I have worked and whom I trust. And I'm sure I'll get some unsolicited advice as we go along, and that's a good thing. I believe that the Secretary will be difficult to replace, but I think there will be worthy Americans who can contribute, who are willing to serve. And with all these places where we have vacancies, I want to cast a wide net.

And I think the American people sent us another message on Tuesday. They want us to work together. They like it when we try to have principled compromise. And they want us to create a vital center, that is, not one that just splits the difference but one that moves the country forward in an aggressive way, Republicans and Democrats and independents alike. And I will be looking, in all these personnel decisions that I have to make, across a broad span of American people to try to get the best people to create that vital center and take this country into the 21st century.

And I'll see you all tomorrow and look forward to answering your questions. Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:50 p.m. in the Cross Halls on the State Floor at the White House.

## The President's News Conference

November 8, 1996

### Chief of Staff Transition

*The President.* Good afternoon. Please be seated. Before I begin I'd like to ask the Vice President and Leon Panetta and Erskine Bowles to join me up here, in no particular order. [Laughter]

Let me begin by once again thanking the American people for the honor they have bestowed upon me and the responsibility they have once again placed in my hands. I will work hard over the next 4 years to uphold their trust, to protect our shared values, and to meet our common challenges.

To do that, I want our administration to be able to serve the American people as well in the next 4 years as we have in the past 4. I must, therefore, begin by announcing that Leon Panetta, who has been my Chief of Staff since 1994, will be resigning to return to California.

I understand why he wants to return home after so many long years and long hours, but that doesn't make it any easier for me to see him go. No one in recent memory has better served the administration—any administration—or the American people than Leon Panetta in what is perhaps the most difficult of all the jobs in public service in Washington today.

As a civil rights official, a distinguished Member of Congress, an OMB Director, Leon Panetta brought his sharp mind and his huge heart to bear on every task he ever undertook. He became my Chief of Staff at a difficult time. He leaves with a remarkable record: deep reduction in the deficit, millions of new jobs, a strong defense of programs for those in need, including food stamps. All these bear Leon's stamp.

Just as important as the work he did was the way he did it. He saw our White House staff as a family. They returned his devotion. His easy laugh and his level head kept our priorities straight and our spirits up.

He and I have often had the opportunity to wonder at the miracle of America that took us this far. He is a child of immigrants who came to this country in search of a better life and found it in the walnut groves of California. He has become my great friend, more than my countryman, more than my fellow Democrat, more even than my fellow worker. In the language of his people, he is my *paesan*. [Laughter] And I love him very much.

To Sylvia, Christopher, Carmelo, Jim, Elizabeth, Christina, and the grandchildren, Michael and Elizabeth, I know how proud he is of you, and you must be very proud of him.

To succeed Leon Panetta, I wanted someone of stature, intellect, dedication, drive, and the capacity to do this virtually impossible job, both a manager and a leader. I'm proud to announce that I am naming Erskine Bowles as the next White House Chief of Staff. He's combined brilliant business success and dedicated public service. As an investment banker, he recognized that our successes come not just from our big firms but from small and medium-size ones, entrepreneurs with energy and ideas he worked hard to give the opportunity to start new businesses and to expand the ones they were running.

When I became President, I wanted to transform the Small Business Administration from a political backwater to an engine of economic growth. Erskine Bowles did it beyond my wildest expectations. He revitalized the SBA. He doubled the loan volume. He dramatically increased loans to women and minority business owners even as he cut paperwork and trimmed bureaucracy.

I then asked him to serve as the Deputy Chief of Staff. He was one of those most responsible for bringing focus and direction to our efforts. Quietly, behind the scenes, he led our effort to educate the public on what was at stake in last year's budget fight. Through it all, he became my close friend and trusted adviser.